SFPUC CHLORAMINE CONVERSION

Question & Answer Sheet

1. What is chloramine?

Chloramine is a disinfectant used in drinking water to remove bacteria and viruses. It consists of chlorine and ammonia.

2. Why is the City of Milpitas converting from chlorine to chloramine?

For many reasons. (1) Chloramine is a better choice as a final disinfectant than chlorine alone because chloramine produces lower levels of disinfectant by-products like trihalomethanes, suspected carcinogens that form when chlorine mixes with natural organic substances in water. (2) The conversion will enable our agency to comply with more stringent regulatory standards (present and anticipated). (3) Chloramine is more stable than chlorine and lasts longer in the distribution system. This provides increased protection from bacterial and viral contamination.

3. When will the conversion occur?

February 2, 2004. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and agencies like ours that receive water from SFPUC will switch their drinking water disinfection system from chlorine to chloramine on February 2, 2004.

4. Which customers will be affected by the conversion?

San Francisco residential and commercial customers and water agencies and utilities in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Alameda counties that receive water from the SFPUC will be affected by the conversion.

5. How many utilities currently use chloraminated water?

Most Bay Area utilities and many communities nationwide have already switched to chloramine for drinking water disinfection. Local water providers include: Alameda County Water District, East Bay Municipal Utility District, Marin Municipal Water District and Santa Clara Valley Water District. Some water providers throughout the United States have been using it for over 80 years.

6. Will the water taste different after the conversion to chloramine?

Possibly. Most consumers should not notice the change. In fact, many consumers from other utilities report chloramine improves the taste and odor of drinking water.

7. Is chloraminated water safe?

Chloraminated water is safe for people and animals to: drink, cook with, bathe in, water the garden, and for all other general uses. However, as with chlorine, precautions must be taken to remove or neutralize chloramine during the kidney dialysis process, in the preparation of water for fish tanks and ponds, and for businesses requiring highly processed water.

8. Is it safe to wash open wounds with chloraminated water?

Yes. Chloraminated water is completely safe to use on cuts and wounds.

9. How will chloramine affect household plumbing, pipes, and water heaters?

After the conversion, rubber parts on some household plumbing and water heaters may degrade faster than previously experienced. When replacing rubber plumbing parts, ask for chloramine-resistant parts, which are readily available. Plumbing and hardware supply stores and plumbers will be able to provide further information.

10. Do I need to take any precautions or do anything different when using chloraminated water?

Only three special groups need to take precautions with chloraminated water: fish, reptile and amphibian owners, dialysis facilities, and businesses using or requiring highly treated water.

11. What types of businesses will be affected?

Businesses using highly processed water may be affected. Types of businesses may include: laboratories, microchip manufacturers, biotech companies, soft drink bottlers, photography labs, or restaurants or seafood suppliers with fish tanks. Businesses should contact a water treatment professional or an equipment supplier to review their treatment process.